

UNCLAS SANAA 003099

SIPDIS

STATE PLEASE PASS TO STATE/OES/ETC FOR H.LEE,
STATE/EB/TPP/ABT FOR R.SINGH, AND USDA/FAS/BIG FOR
JPPASSINO.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SENV ETRD EAGR EAID TBIO YM ENVIRONMENT

SUBJECT: YEMEN BIOSAFETY STATUS - CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON
BIOSAFETY, ROUND TWO

REF: SECSTATE 259661

¶11. Ref A asked posts to help identify a small number of countries in order to engage them in more detailed bilateral discussions over the coming months over issues related to the Cartagena Protocol. Since the conclusion of the February 2004 First Meeting of Parties (MOP-1) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the ROYG has not enacted or initiated any new laws, regulations or practices regarding US agricultural and living modified organisms (LMO) trade.

¶12. A draft law banning LMO products was introduced by the Cabinet over a year ago. After consideration, the Cabinet decided to send the draft law to the Yemen Standardization, Metrology and Quality Control Organization (YSMQCO), a regulatory agency comprised of agricultural, meteorological and other scientists. The YSMQCO recommended banning LMO agricultural imports and sent this recommendation to the Minister of Industry and Trade, Dr. Khaled Rajeh Sheikh. Minister Sheikh froze the draft law until further study could be made. YSMQCO Vice Director General Ahmed Al-Bashah noted that the ROYG would like to observe the experiences of other Arab countries and coordinate with them on these biosafety issues. (Comment: Post believes Minister Sheikh is sitting on the recommendation as he does not want to stifle trade relations or bring greater attention to this matter with prominent countries who trade LMO products. End Comment)

¶13. Discussion on LMO issues continues through the ROYG interagency Biosafety Committee. Mr. Al-Bashah cited ongoing and sporadic press coverage of the anticipated dangers of genetically modified organism (GMO) products. While GMO policy formulation is in its infancy in Yemen, the USDA Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) has actively supported the ROYG's ongoing efforts on this issue.

¶14. In early December 2004, ATO sponsored the travel of two standardization working level officials to Cairo for a LMO Middle Eastern forum for discussions with 14 Middle Eastern and North African government officials including Yemen represented by Al-Bashah. Al-Bashah said he appreciated hearing about his colleagues' work on LMO regulations and would use this knowledge as a resource for Yemen's biosafety policy making. He specifically cited the experience of the Gulf countries, Egypt, and Jordan as examples.

¶15. Overall, Yemen continues to tread water on LMO issues while its decisionmakers await further guidance from countries in the region and more input from interlocutors such the U.S.

KRAJESKI